

For tours departing beyond 2010, itineraries may be subject to change. This will be confirmed by the publication of the 2011 brochure (issued in Sep 10).

2010
Tour Dossier

EXPLORE!

FAMILY ADVENTURES



VENEZUELA Dossier Ref. FVZ

Angel Falls & Ranch Adventure – Teenage tour

Amended 21 Apr 2010. Valid from 01 Jan 2010 to 31 Dec 2010
Since first issue this dossier has been updated with amendments to the following sections: taxes; itinerary days 4 to 6; equipment

As our itineraries may be amended from time to time, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers, please ensure you have the most up-to-date copy of this dossier immediately before you travel. You can download the dossier from our website, www.explore.co.uk. Of course we will notify you of any significant changes, but sometimes minor changes may simply be added to the tour dossier.

JOINING TOUR ABROAD

15 days/14 nights Land Only
Caracas to Caracas Airport

Join Caracas (day 1)

End Caracas Airport (day 15)

Clients booked on 'Land Only' arrangements should make their own way to the joining point in Caracas. Please refer to separate 'Joining Instructions' for name and address of hotel and time of rendezvous with tour leader.

GROUP TRAVEL FROM LONDON

16 days/15 nights Tour including
Connecting Group Flights
London-Caracas-London

Depart from London Heathrow Airport, to arrive in Caracas the same day (day 1 of Land Only itinerary).

Return from Caracas (day 15 of Land Only itinerary) and arrive London Heathrow the following day.

Passengers with non-group flights booked through Explore should refer to their individual confirmation invoice for flight details. Transfers to and from the airport are not included unless purchased in addition to the tour package.

SPECIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Among the many highlights featured on this tour, we particularly mention:

- * **ANGEL FALLS** 4-day boat trip down the

Earth Matters

- The Travel Foundation

Explore are active members and supporters of the Travel Foundation which has established a variety of sustainable tourism projects in destinations and works with industry to improve practice. Visit their website www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk

- Tourism Concern

Explore support the work of Tourism Concern who campaign for fairly and ethically traded tourism, and are part of its Ethical Tour Operator Group www.tourismconcern.org.uk

- For further information on responsible travel go to <http://www.explore.co.uk/ResponsibleTourism/>



- Akanan and Carrao rivers towards the base of Angel Falls by canoe. Visit the falls and hike to Laime's Lookout.
- * **ANDEAN FOOTHILLS** White water rafting on the Asequia River and mountain biking.
 - * **LOS LLANOS** One of the world's top wilderness areas: a chance for some exceptional wildlife viewing and a stay at a working cattle ranch, with alligators, anacondas and anteaters in abundance.
 - * **CHICHIRIVICHI DE LA COSTA** Snorkelling (optional) and relaxing in the Caribbean.

This stunning two-week adventure takes us across one of the most scenically breathtaking countries in South America, as we journey from the thundering heights of Angel Falls to the tranquil waters of the Caribbean. Taking in some of the most exceptional natural wonders in the Americas we travel by boat along the Akanan, Carrao and Churun Rivers, to the very foot (in the wet season) of the world's highest waterfall, before journeying to the vast wetlands of Los Llanos, where we spend some time wildlife viewing amongst the cattle and cowboys of Canafistola, before ending our journey amongst the crystalline seas off Venezuela's Caribbean coast. Travelling by boat and on foot we will traverse areas little visited by tourists, staying in jungle lodges and cattle ranches, sleeping in hammocks and rustic jungle cabins and enjoying the breathtaking spectacle of Mother Nature in all her diverse glory. Please note: In the dry season, between January and May, the low height of the rivers may prevent us from navigating the Churun river, making the hike to the foot of the Angel Falls impossible. However during this period we extend the flight to Kavac to fly over the falls and view them from the air (weather permitting).

Carbon Offsets Included

As part of our responsible tourism policy we offset carbon emissions from all customer and staff flights booked by Explore. Our carbon offset partner is Climate Care. If you are making independent flight arrangements to join one of our tours, may we urge you to offset your carbon emissions through Climate Care, or a similar offsetting scheme.

LAND ONLY ITINERARY

Be Prepared: Please bear in mind that some of the areas of Venezuela visited on this trip are still remote and conditions can change from one day to the next. As far as practical we shall adhere to the day-to-day route as printed below, but overnight stops may vary from those suggested. Also, mother nature as it is, we are unable to guarantee any particular wildlife sightings.

Swimming opportunities – whether in swimming pools, rivers, lakes, the sea or the ocean – are indicated on the itinerary by the following icon:

Please note: Participation in canoeing, kayaking, or rafting (including white-water) requires that you are able to swim 25 metres unaided.

Accommodation and Included Meals: Please find the key to our accommodation ratings overleaf, and note that included meals are indicated in the itinerary below and are shown on the day they are provided (B = breakfast, L = lunch, D = dinner).

Day 1. Join Caracas
Overnight hotel H+.

Day 2. Fly to Kavac via Puerto Ordaz
Transferring out to the airport this morning, we take a scheduled flight to Puerto Ordaz, from where we then board a small charter flight on to the pretty Pemon Indian village of Kavac, at the foot of the towering walls of Auyan-Tepui in the Canaima National Park. The flight takes us over the vast bulk of Venezuela's Devil's Mountain, one of the most impressive settings in the country and, weather permitting, there may be the chance to take a flight across the thundering cascades of Angel Falls (please note: this excursion is included between January and May, whilst the rest of the year it is offered as an optional trip at US\$55 per person). Time permitting this afternoon we will take a hike out to the impressive setting of nearby Kavac Canyon, where it is possible to swim through the narrow fissure to an equally impressive waterfall at the other end. The canyon itself measures just 1.5 metres in width, but its towering 30 meter walls and 100 metre length make it an exhilarating venue to spend the afternoon. Another alternative for this afternoon is to pay a visit

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to a local Indian community to gain a fascinating insight into life amongst the (almost lost) jungles of eastern Venezuela.


Overnight jungle cabins H (included meals: B, L, D).

Day 3. Travel down the Akanan River to Iwana Meru

Over the next four days we make our way round the imposing flat-topped bulk of Auyan-Tepui by river – a journey that relatively few people have experienced. Staying in spartan accommodation, sleeping in hammocks and relying upon the skills of our Indian boatmen to guide their 10m craft through the rapids and whirlpools of the river, we journey through a landscape of virgin forest, where brightly plumed birds break the eerie silence with their strident calls. Our first day sees us transferring by jeep to neighbouring Kamarata to join our launch, from where we then traverse the flowing waters of the Akanan River towards our camp at Iwana Meru, skirting the eastern edge of Auyan-Tepui as we head into the jungle. Be prepared for some rough adventure over the coming days as we make our way down river, but be assured that the experiences more than compensates for any minor discomforts. On arrival at camp there may be the opportunity to enjoy a refreshing dip in the river, or else take a hike out into the surrounding forest.

Overnight jungle shelter C (included meals: B, L, D). 

Day 4. AM launch along the Carrao River to Arenal; PM free

Today, we continue down the Akanan to its confluence with the Carrao River, passing through rapids enroute to our camp at Arenal. The camp itself is situated close to the junction with the Churun River and the spectacular Angel Falls themselves. Depending on how long today's journey takes, which will be subject to water levels of the river, there should hopefully be plenty of opportunities to either swim or enjoy some walks into the jungle that surrounds the camp. **Overnight jungle shelter (included meals: B, L, D).** 

Day 5. Launch to Angel Falls; trek to Alexander Laime's Lookout

One of the country's major natural attractions and the world's highest waterfall, Angel Falls present us with a breathtaking spectacle today, as we hike to the base of its 979m-drop. Located in the Canaima National Park, in Bolivar state, the falls were not actually discovered until 1933, when a pilot-adventurer by the name of Jimmy Angel flew over them whilst searching for gold. Angel returned 3 years later with his wife and two companions and on trying to land the plane was forced to abandon it on the summit of the falls and trek some 13 days back to civilisation. The downed plane remained in situ for another 33 years, before finally being

rescued and restored to its former glory (today it occupies pride of place in front of Ciudad Bolivar airport). We aim to trek up to Laime's Lookout today, following the trail cleared by the Latvian explorer Aleksandrs Laime in 1949 that runs from the Churun River to a viewpoint close to the base of the falls. Plummeting from the top of the mesa, nearly 1000m into the gorge below, Angel Falls presents a spectacle of quite outstanding beauty, its cascading water vaporising in mid-air to form a glistening white spray that collects in the pool at the foot of the cataract, affording any onlookers a vision that is without doubt one of the most impressive sights anywhere on the South American continent. **Overnight jungle shelter (included meals: B, L, D).** 

Day 6. AM launch to Canaima; fly to Ciudad Bolivar

Our final day on the river sees us continuing to Canaima, located on a wide stretch of the Carrao River known as Canaima Lagoon. Facing us is the beautiful sweep of the Hacha Falls, its amber-tinted water (from the tannin leached from the rainforest) continuously pouring into the lagoon. Set against a backdrop of distant and mysterious tepuis and a foreground of sandy beaches and waving palms, this will certainly be a visual highlight of our river adventure. On arrival there is a chance to visit the nearby waterfall of Salto el Sapo nearby, where it may be possible to walk behind the thundering curtain of plunging water as it tumbles into the lagoon below. Ending our journey at Canaima's airport, we then board a charter flight on to the historic town of Ciudad Bolivar. **Overnight hotel H+ (included meals: B, L).**

Day 7. Fly to Barinas, then drive to Acequia Camp; PM rafting

Flying via Caracas, we head next for the city of Barinas, lying along the course of the Santo Domingo River on the western plains that occupy the foothills of the Cordillera de Merida. On arrival we transfer by road the short distance to our camp at Acequia, situated amidst the white water rafting centre of the country. This afternoon we will then take to the waters of the Acequia River to enjoy some rafting along what many consider to be the cleanest and most scenic river in Venezuela. The river cuts through a landscape of dense rainforest and spectacular scenery, its fast flowing waters offering us a chance to enjoy the exhilarating buzz of grade III rapids, whilst taking in a spell binding landscape of mountains vistas and jungle vegetation. All safety equipment and instruction will be provided. In the event that the river levels are too high and the grade exceeds IV, the rafting will not operate and alternative activities will be provided instead. **2 nights rustic cabins C (included meals: B, L, D).**

Day 8. Rafting and mountain biking

This morning we plan to return to the white waters, this time to raft on the Bum Bum (no joke!) River. Again, if water levels are too low or too high alternative, land-based, activities will be provided instead. After a morning of exhilarating white water rafting, we plan to take to mountain bikes in the afternoon to explore more of this picturesque region by bike. **(Included meals: B, L, D).**

Days 9 & 10. Drive to Canafistola Ranch; wildlife viewing

We continue our journey today through one of the finest wildlife areas on the planet, as we make our way across the Los Llanos wetlands, the vast expansive plains of central Venezuela that are fed by the waters of the Orinoco, the third largest river on earth. This is Venezuela's most comprehensive wildlife area, where you can find an extensive array of flora and fauna, including caimans, giant anteaters, capybaras and freshwater dolphins. We will spend the next two nights at a working cattle ranch, set in the heart of this spectacular region, and over the coming days we may be lucky enough to spot huge Orinoco crocodiles, turtle and a rich selection of the nearly 750 species of birds that reside in Venezuela. Our first afternoon affords a chance to do some wildlife viewing and we may see some traditional Venezuelan cowboys up close as they work the cattle on the ranch. We will also have an opportunity to take to the waters by boat on our second day, to enjoy an altogether different perspective of the region and fish in the rivers, where we can realistically expect to catch piranhas!

2 nights hammock camp C+ (included meals: Bx2, Lx2, Dx2).

Day 11. Drive to Calabozo via San Fernando de Apure

Making the most of the wildlife advantages of an early start, our final day in the Llanos sees us driving via San Fernando de Apure to Calabozo, crossing the grasslands and taking in some more wildlife viewing enroute as we make our way towards the capital of Apure State. Following lunch in the city we then continue by road to Calabozo, situated beside the waters of the Guárico River to the southwest of Caracas. Founded during the 17th century its remote location saw it become something of a Spanish gulag, colonial prisoners being readily offered the choice between imprisonment and banishment to the plains of Calabozo. Located today in the centre of the country's cattle country, the city prospers from the raising of livestock, its old churches and colonial history providing an interesting backdrop to our overnight stay. **Overnight hotel H+ (included meals: B).**

EXPLORE ACCOMMODATION RATINGS : An important feature of many Explore tours is the wide range of accommodation used, and since the beginning our philosophy has been to select accommodation to suit the itinerary - not the other way round.

To help gauge the comfort level on your chosen tour, we have graded the accommodation standards at all night-stops using the rating guide below. Please keep in mind however that standards can vary from one trip to the next, and occasionally we may need to change a night-stop without advance warning.

Hotels / lodges / guesthouses - or similar

H++ : Comfortable hotels, lodges or guesthouses with twin or single rooms and en suite facilities. With air-conditioning/heating where appropriate and with reliable hot and cold water. Generally good levels of service and often with added amenities such as restaurant, bar, gardens or swimming pool.

H+ : Standard hotels, lodges or guesthouses, usually with twin or single rooms and en suite facilities. These are generally standard, no-frills hotels with adequate amenities and service standards. Whilst comfort levels are perfectly acceptable to most, please don't expect too much! These are often small, family run establishments.

H : Basic hotels, lodges or guesthouses (also village houses, mountain huts, hotels etc often come into this category). Accommodation may be communal or dorm-style, and WC / washing facilities are usually shared. Running hot and cold water may be unreliable or even unavailable. These can be the most rewarding and memorable places to stay, but comfort levels are low.

Camping

C++ : Comfortable, full service camping generally in permanent, fixed camps with walk-in tents, proper beds and often with en-suite facilities and other amenities such as dining area, bar, gardens and a swimming pool. Your bed-linen is provided.

C+ : Standard camping in private or public campsites, usually with WC and washing / showering facilities in a shared ablutions building. Typically in two person tents, and some level of participation is often required. Generally bed linen or sleeping bags are not provided.

C : Basic camping in wild camps where facilities / amenities may be limited or non-existent. Generally there is no running water, and we dig a temporary bush toilet. Two person tents are often used, but occasionally we sleep under the stars. Participation normally required and sleeping bags usually not provided.

Note: other accommodation, for example, aboard boats or on overnight sleeper trains is described individually at the appropriate point in the tour itinerary above.

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Day 12. Drive to Colonia Tovar; PM free


A morning's drive takes us to the attractive village of La Colonia Tovar, nestled in the cloud forest to the east of Henri Pittier National Park. Founded by German settlers in 1843, the villagers' Black Forest ancestry is very much reflected in their uniquely European architecture and clothing. Isolated for generations, the settlers managed to retain much of their German traditions, language and even food, before finally becoming integrated into their Spanish heritage. A quiet farming community today, Colonia Tovar is dedicated to the production of fruit and vegetables ideally suited to its temperate climate and even today of its German culinary fare has managed to survive the passage of time, with beer and marmalade being popular reminders of its European past. With a free afternoon there is time to explore a little something of the town, enjoying its Bavarian ambience, relaxing amongst the spectacular landscapes and perhaps doing a little shopping.

Overnight hotel H+ (included meals: B).

Day 13. Am optional visit to cloud forest; drive to Chichirivichi

This morning we have a chance to pay a visit to a cloud forest (optional), before continuing along the coastal Cordillera to Chichirivichi de la Costa on the Caribbean seaboard. Founded by escaped slaves some 150 years ago and set around a horseshoe shaped bay, Chichirivichi offers an idyllic mix of golden sandy beaches, coconut palms and views out across the Caribbean, making it an ideal spot to spend our last few days. **2 nights hotel H+ (included meals: B).** 

Day 14. In Chichirivichi

A free day today affords an opportunity to explore something of this marine wonderland, with a chance to enjoy some snorkelling in the crystalline waters offshore. The Caribbean can boast nearly 10% of the world's coral reefs, presently a rich ecosystem that supports some of the most diverse habitats on the planet. Off the Venezuelan coast the abundance of reef fish and other marine animals is equal to anything else in these waters, with dolphins often regular visitors to the coastal waters. Of course you may just simply wish to relax and enjoy the tropical setting, making the most of the time to simply revel in the tranquil surroundings. **(Included meals: B).** 

Day 15. Tour ends Chichirivichi

Tour ends after breakfast. **(Included meals: B).**

PERSONAL EXPENSES

You'll need some extra money to cover meals not included in the tour price, other sightseeing, **airport taxes (approx US\$100)**, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Foreign Exchange

Local Currency: Venezuelan Bolivar.

Recommended Currency for Exchange: We advise that you change some spending money (minimum US\$350) into local currency at the airport on arrival in Caracas. Carry all your funds in US\$ Cash NOT Sterling or Travellers Cheques which are more difficult to exchange.

Where to Exchange: Once outside Caracas there is little opportunity to exchange money.

ATM Availability: Limited.

Credit Card Acceptance: Limited.

Travellers Cheques: Travellers Cheques are often difficult to exchange.

Additional Information: NB: avoid bills smaller than US\$20 as these are often not accepted in out of the way places.

Up-to-date information re: global exchange rates can be obtained at <https://www.currency-express.com/explore/>

OPTIONAL SIGHTSEEING

CHICHIRIVICHI Snorkelling equipment US\$12.

Meal Plan

Local Food and Drink: 14 breakfasts, 9 lunches and 8 dinners are included on this trip; please be prepared to pay for all other meals. Prices quoted are correct as of the date this dossier was originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note that costs for drinks and meals can vary depending on location and the prices below are given as an average guide only.

	UK	Venezuela
Coffee/Tea	£1.20	£0.70
Soft drink	0.80	0.70
Bottle of Beer	2.50	0.70
2 Course Meal*	10.00	7.00
3 Course Meal**	18.00	10.00
Bottle of wine	10.00	7.00

*Cheap local fare in a small cafe or restaurant.

**Typical food in a simple, reasonably comfortable mid-range restaurant.

Tipping

Local Staff: In this area, tipping is a recognised part of life; local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly, you should allow US\$50 for tipping.

Tour Leader: At your discretion you might also consider tipping your tour leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Seasonal Climate

Venezuela's climate is tropical with little seasonal change in temperature, but great variation with altitude. It can be hot at midday, but cold at night. The dry season, from December to April sees temperatures reaching 32°C during the day at the coast, increasing between June and September. The rainy season is from June to November, with the rain peaking during October. Caracas can be cool at night, especially from December to February.

Additional information and climate charts can be accessed at <http://www.explore.co.uk/> weather. Seasonal weather patterns can be unpredictable. Up-to-date information on the weather worldwide can be found by following the BBC weather link on this page.

Visa Requirements

A Venezuelan Tourist Card is required by citizens of the UK, AUS, NZ, CAN and USA. These can be obtained from consular offices or at check-in desk of airline to Venezuela. Other nationalities should consult the relevant consulate, or consular office.

All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related issues with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

Vaccinations & Protection

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against yellow fever, malaria, tetanus, infectious hepatitis, typhoid, and polio. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on different prophylaxis available against malaria.

Special Note: Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.

The above is not an exhaustive list.

Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.

Electric Supply and Plugs

For comprehensive information regarding voltages and plug types in use in the countries visited, follow the relevant link at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Traveladvice/>

Insurance

Travel insurance is compulsory for all bookings. You must take your policy document with you on tour, as your tour leader will ask to see this at the start of the trip. Your documentation must state in writing that you are the named policyholder and that the cover is valid for your period of travel. Your policy document must also indicate that you have medical expenses and emergency repatriation cover and a 24-hour contact telephone number for your Insurance Company must be shown on your documentation in case of emergency.

If you are unable to provide all this information at the start of the trip you will not be allowed to join the trip. If you have purchased Explore Insurance you should carry the Master Certificate leaflet with you, which outlines the conditions of the policy together with a copy of your Confirmation Invoice, which is your proof of purchase of insurance. Explore Worldwide are an Appointed Representative of Campbell Irvine Limited, who is authorised and regulated by the Financial Services authority.

Know Before You Go

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs, including advice re: the legality of and local attitudes towards same-sex relationships. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Advice follow the link at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Traveladvice/>

PACKING FOR YOUR TRIP

A complete list of clothing and personal gear is contained in Explore's **'General Information Booklet'**, available only after a booking has been accepted. Here we make a few specific recommendations with regard to your tour.

Luggage: You need 3 bags for this tour: a main bag for the bulk of your luggage (holdall), a smaller daysack for your immediate requirements and a soft small bag for the gear you will need to take to the Falls (please see packing list). Your main luggage will be left behind in Caracas and you will see it again in Barinas. Total allowance: **30lbs/14kgs** (due to weight limit on domestic flights).

Clothing: Pack essentially for **'Hot conditions'**. You will need loose-fitting, comfortable clothes for hot, humid conditions. Caracas can be cool at night during winter months (December to February), so a fleece is advised. Lightweight waterproofs (inc trousers) and plastic bags to keep clothing dry are essential. Also bring a sunhat and pack at least one set of clothes with long sleeves and legs to avoid sunburn and insect bites.

Footwear: Lightweight trail boots and sandals for travelling. Whilst on the river you will need tennis shoes/trainers, which you don't mind getting wet, to protect your feet.

Equipment: Bring a 2-season sleeping bag, inflatable cushion / travel pillow plus a sleeping sheet, a head torch, a quick drying

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